

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BONN 12382 01 OF 03 221720Z

53

ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 12382

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, GW

SUBJECT: SPD DEPUTY CHAIRMAN KOSCHNICK'S ASSESSMENT OF
THE SPD'S CHANCES IN THE BUNDESTAG ELECTION

BEGIN SUMMARY: SPD DEPUTY CHAIRMAN HANS KOSCHNICK MET
JULY 20 WITH NATO AND EC EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO FOLLOW
WEST GERMAN DOMESTIC POLITICS. IN A TWO-HOUR, GIVE-AND-
TAKE SESSION KOSCHNICK GAVE HIS ANALYSIS OF THE
DOMESTIC POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE FRG. KOSCHNICK IS
CONFIDENT THAT THE SPD/FDP COALITION WILL MAINTAIN CON-
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PAGE 02 BONN 12382 01 OF 03 221720Z

TROL OF THE GOVERNMENT IN BONN AFTER THE OCTOBER 3

ELECTION. HE EXPECTS THAT THE COALITION'S MAJORITY AFTER OCTOBER 3 WILL BE LESS THAN IN 1972 BUT SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN IN 1969. FOLLOWING THE 1969 ELECTION, THE SPD/FDP COALITION HAD A 12-SEAT MAJORITY AND IN THE 1972 ELECTION THE SPD/FDP COALITION RECEIVED A 46-SEAT MAJORITY.

KOSCHNICK FEELS THE ECONOMIC UPTURN OR, MORE ACCURATELY, THE VOTERS' OPTIMISM ABOUT THE ECONOMY, WORK IN FAVOR OF THE GOVERNMENT PARTIES. HOWEVER, THE CONTINUING PROBLEM OF INTERNAL SECURITY AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AN OUTBREAK OF TERRORISM SHORTLY BEFORE THE ELECTION, WORRIES THE GOVERNMENT. KOSCHNICK DOES NOT EXPECT FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THE CAMPAIGN. ACCORDING TO KOSCHNICK, THE EAST EUROPEANS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE GDR AND POSSIBLY ROMANIA, FAVOR A SPD/FDP VICTORY, WHILE THE SOVIETS ARE AMBIVALENT ABOUT THE OUTCOME. HE AGREES WITH CDU/CSU CHANCELLOR-CANDIDATE KOHL THAT IT WILL BE THE OLDER VOTERS RATHER THAN THE YOUTH VOTE THAT WILL MAKE THE CRUCIAL DIFFERENCE IN THE OUTCOME OF THE 1976 ELECTION. END OF SUMMARY.

1. SPD DEPUTY CHAIRMAN HANS KOSCHNICK MET ON JULY 20 WITH A GROUP OF EMBASSY OFFICERS FROM THE NATO AND EC COUNTRIES. IT WAS AGREED THAT THE DISCUSSION AT THE MEETING BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL IN ORDER THAT EVERYONE WOULD SPEAK FRANKLY. IN A THIRTY-MINUTE PRESENTATION FOLLOWED BY A ONE AND ONE-HALF HOUR QUESTION PERIOD KOSCHNICK GAVE THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE FRG:

2. THE MAJOR FACTOR FAVORING THE COALITION IN THE OCTOBER 3 ELECTION IS THE GROWING OPTIMISM ON THE PART OF THE VOTERS ABOUT THE ECONOMY. EVEN AMONG THE UNEMPLOYED, EXPECTATIONS ARE HIGH ABOUT THE ECONOMIC FUTURE. IN CONTRAST TO THE UNITED STATES WHERE UNEMPLOYMENT DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION OF THE 1930'S HAD A LONG-TERM INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN POLITICS, IT WAS THE DEVASTATING INFLATION DURING THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC, RATHER

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PAGE 03 BONN 12382 01 OF 03 221720Z

THAN THE LARGE-SCALE UNEMPLOYMENT, THAT HAS LEFT ITS MARK ON GERMAN POLITICS. THEREFORE, THE GERMAN VOTER IS MORE CONCERNED ABOUT INFLATION THAN ABOUT UNEMPLOYMENT. THE STRUCTURE OF UNEMPLOYMENT HAS CHANGED IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC . AS A RESULT OF AUTOMATION AND RATIONALIZATION, IT IS THE UNTRAINED, WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS RATHER THAN THE BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS (SKILLED OR UNSKILLED) WHO ARE BEING HIT THE HARDEST BY UNEMPLOYMENT.

3. THE SPD HAS MADE A TACTVICAL ERROR IN ASSUMING THAT
THE MASSES OF GERMANXACATIONERSHILL RETURN FROM
THEIR TRAVELS ABROAD JUST BEFORE THE ELECTION AND WILL
BE CONVINCED THAT GERMANY, IN COMPARISON TO OTHER
EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, IS AN ECONOMICAL AND POLITICAL
"MODELL." MOST GERGANS ##

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PERHAPS THAT THEY HAVE TO IHER PRICES. HOWEVER,
WHEN THEY RETURN TO GERMANY AND FIND THEMSELVES SHORT
OF FUNDS, HAVING SPENT TOO MUCH ON VACATION, THEY WILL
BE UNHAPPY BECAUSE EVERYTHING WILL SEEM SO EXPENSIVE IN

NOTE BY OCT: ## OMISSION; CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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PAGE 01 BONN 12382 02 OF 03 221728Z

53

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 BONN 12382

"MODELL DEUTSCHLAND." NEVERTHELESS, THE GENERAL OPTIMISM FELT BY THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE UPTURN IN THE ECONOMY SHOULD FAVOR THE GOVERNMENT AT THE POLLS.

4. THE DEEP-SEATED, PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCERN GERMANS FEEL ABOUT INTERNAL SECURITY IS LIKELY TO HURT THE GOVERNMENT AND HELP THE OPPOSITION IN THE ELECTION. THE GERMAN PEOPLE ARE OVERLY CONCERNED ABOUT LAW AND ORDER AND UNFORTUNATELY THE EMPHASIS IS MORE ON ORDER THAN ON LAW. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BONN 12382 02 OF 03 221728Z

SUCH INCIDENTS AS THE RECENT BERLIN JAILBREAK FEED THESE GERMAN INSECURITIES AND WEAKEN PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO COPE WITH TERRORISM. THE MISTAKES MADE IN BERLIN, WHICH PERMITTED THE FOUR ACCUSED TERRORISTS TO ESCAPE, ARE AS POLITICALLY DAMAGING TO THE SPD AS THEY ARE TO THE FDP. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS ESPECIALLY CONCERNED THAT THERE WILL BE AN OUTBREAK OF TERRORISM SHORTLY BEFORE THE ELECTION. SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE VERY POLITICALLY DAMAGING TO THE COALITION.

5. UNLIKE 1972, WHEN A LARGE NUMBER OF FIRST-TIME VOTERS WERE ENTERING THE ELECTORATE BECAUSE OF THE REDUCTION IN THE MINIMUM VOTING AGE, THE 1976 ELECTION IS LIKELY TO BE DECIDED BY THE OLDER VOTERS. IN SOUTHERN GERMANY AND IN PARTS OF WESTERN GERMANY THE MAJORITY OF OLDER VOTERS SUPPORT THE OPPOSITION PARTIES. IN NORTHERN GERMANY THE SPD DOES BETTER AMONG OLDER VOTERS. NATIONALLY, THE SPD MADE A BREAKTHROUGH IN 1972 AND OBTAINED OVER FIFTY PERCENT OF THE OLDER GENERATION'S VOTE. IF THE COALITION IS TO REMAIN IN POWER, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO HOLD ON TO THE GAINS MADE AMONG OLDER VOTERS IN 1972. THE CURRENT DEBATE ABOUT THE FINANCIAL CONDITION OF THE GERMAN PENSION SYSTEM, PARTICULARLY THE ACCUSATION BY THE UNION PARTIES THAT THE SYSTEM IS ON THE VERGE OF BANKRUPTCY, IS AN ATTEMPT TO FRIGHTEN THE OLDER VOTERS SO THAT THEY VOTE FOR THE OPPOSITION.

6. RECENT POLLS SHOW THAT SUPPORT FOR THE FDP HAS DECLINED IN RECENT WEEKS. PART OF THIS MAY BE DUE TO

THE POLARIZATION CREATED BY THE CDU SLOGAN, "FREEDOM
INSTEAD OF SOCIALISM." IN ADDITION TO POLARIZING THE
POLITICAL SITUATION AND LEAVING NO ROOM FOR THE MIDDLE-
OF-THE-ROAD LIBERALS, THE SLOGAN TARS THE FREE DEMOCRATS
WITH THE BRUSH OF BEING ON THE SIDE OF SOCIALISM VERSUS
FREEDOM. THE SLOGAN, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS HELPFUL TO
THE SPD IN THAT IT MOBILIZES SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC VOTERS.
THE MAJOR PROBLEM FOR THE SPD IN THE OCTOBER ELECTION
WILL BE TO TURN OUT THE VOTE. THE DISASTEROUS SHOWING
OF THE SPD IN BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG AND BAVARIA, FOR
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PAGE 03 BONN 12382 02 OF 03 221728Z

EXAMPLE, WAS IN PART BECAUSE MANY TRADITIONAL SPD VOTERS
DID NOT VOTE. THESE TRADITIONAL SPD VOTERS MUST BE
ATTRACTED BACK TO THE POLLS IF THE GOVERNMENT IS TO
REMAIN IN POWER. SPD INTERNAL CONFLICTS ARE PARTICULARLY
DAMAGING IN THAT THEY DISCOURAGE TRADITIONAL SPD
VOTERS, WHO REMAIN HOME IN DISGUST RATHER THAN VOTE FOR
A DIVIDED AND SQUABBLING SPD.

7. UNLESS THERE IS SOME DRAMATIC, INTERNATIONAL DEVELOP-
MENT, SUCH AS AN OUTBREAK OF A NEW ARAB-ISRAELI WAR,
FOREIGN POLICY IS NOT LIKELY TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE
ELECTION. AS FAR AS FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE UNITED
STATES AND NATO IS CONCERNED, THERE IS VERY LITTLE
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE UNION PARTIES AND THE COALITION.
IN THE CASE OF "OSTPOLITIK" THERE ARE, HOWEVER,
DIFFERENCES. FOR EXAMPLE, IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT
THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE CDU/CSU BUNDESTAG
DEPUTIES VOTED AGAINST THE POLISH AGREEMENTS. THE
MAJORITY OF UNION DEPUTIES STILL OPPOSES THE AGREEMENTS.
SOME LEADERS OF THE CDU/CSU, SUCH AS HELMUT KOHL, ARE
MORE SYMPATHETIC TO "OSTPOLITIK" BUT THE RANK-AND-FILE
UNION PARTY MEMBERS, AT LEAST IN THE BUNDESTAG, ARE NOT.

8. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF EAST GERMANY AND POSSIBLY
ROMANIA, THE EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WOULD PREFER THAT
THE COALITION REMAIN IN POWER. THE EAST GERMANS DO NOT
WANT THE COALITION TO REMAIN IN POWER BECAUSE A
SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL/LIBERAL GOVERNMENT IN WEST GERMANY
HAS A SUBVERSIVE INFLUENCE ON THE GDR SOCIETY. THE
SOVIET UNION IS AMBIVALENT ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE
BUNDESTAG ELECTION. THOSE FORCES IN THE SOVIET UNION
THAT FAVOR DETENTE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE STANDARD OF
LIVING PREFER THAT THE SPD/FDP COALITION

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PAGE 01 BONN 12382 03 OF 03 221731Z

53

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 BONN 12382

REMAIN IN POWER. THE ANTI-DETENTE, HARDLINERS, HOWEVER,
ARE MORE CRITICAL OF THE COALITION AND THE POLICY OF
"OSTPOLITIK."

9. IT MADE POLITICAL SENSE FOR GENSCHER TO ENDORSE A
SOCIAL/LIBERAL COALITION AT THE FDP "PARTEITAG" AT THE
END OF MAY. THE FDP DOES SERVE AS A BRIDGE FOR THE
COALITION TO INDUSTRY AND OTHER GROUPS IN SOCIETY.
THEREFORE, JUST FROM A SELF-INTEREST POINT OF VIEW IT IS
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PAGE 02 BONN 12382 03 OF 03 221731Z

REASONABLE FOR THE LIBERALS TO FORM A COALITION WITH THE SPD.BECAUSE THEY HAVE A VERY DISTINCT FUNCTION TO PERFORM. THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT SEGMENT OF GERMAN VOTERS WHO OPPOSE ANY PARTY HAVING AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY AND THE FDP PROVIDES AN OUTLET FOR THIS SENTIMENT. THE LIBERAL PARTY ALSO SERVES THE NEED OF THOSE VOTERS WHO ARE PROGRESSIVE BUT DO NOT WANT TO VOTE FOR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. IT APPEARS THAT THE ELECTION WILL BE VERY CLOSE AND IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE SPD WILL REMAIN THE LARGEST PARTY IN THE BUNDESTAG AFTER OCTOBER 3.

10. THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE OF THE SO-CALLED 4TH PARTY IS UNCLEAR. IT IS LIKELY THAT IT WILL DISAPPEAR BEFORE THE ELECTION AND CALL FOR ITS SUPPORTERS TO VOTE FOR THE CDU/CSU. THE 4TH PARTY IS FINANCED TO THE TUNE OF ABOUT 28 MILLION DEUTSCH MARKS. THERE ARE ACCUSATIONS THAT THE SPD IS SECRETLY FINANCING THE 4TH PARTY. THIS IS UNTRUE AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS COULD FIND MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE WAYS TO SPEND 28 MILLION DEUTSCH MARKS IN THE CAMPAIGN. SHOULD THE CDU, HOWEVER, MAKE A POOR SHOWING IN THE ELECTION, THE 4TH PARTY COULD BECOME THE NUCLEUS FOR A NATION-WIDE CONSERVATIVE PARTY LED BY FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS. STRAUSS IS AN EXTREMELY INTELLIGENT POLITICIAN AND THE CSU IS AN EFFECTIVE AND MODERN POLITICAL PARTY. THEREFORE, A NATION-WIDE CSU WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. HOWEVER, IF AS EXPECTED, THE CDU/CSU MAKES A GOOD SHOWING ON OCTOBER 3 AND COMES WITHIN A FEW PERCENTAGES OF A MAJORITY, IT IS LIKELY THAT KOHL WILL MOVE TO BONN AND BECOME OPPOSITION LEADER AND FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS WILL RETIRE TO BAVARIA TO BECOME MINISTER-PRESIDENT.

11. COMMENT: KOSCHNICK WAS RELATIVELY OPEN AND FRANK AT THE MEETING. HOWEVER, HE AVOIDED COMMENT ON CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT'S RECENT STATEMENT ABOUT BANNING FINANCING ASSISTANCE TO ITALY IF THE COMMUNISTS WERE INCLUDED IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO REFUSED TO COMMENT ON THE LONGEVITY OF AN SPD/FDP COALITION BASED ON A SLIM MAJORITY. HE SAID SUCH A QUESTION SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO PRESIDENT SCHEEL. IN SUM, KOSCHNICK'S BRIEFING SEEMS TO REFLECT THE SITUATION AS IT

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PAGE 03 BONN 12382 03 OF 03 221731Z

NOW STANDS. HE ADMITTED THAT THINGS COULD CHANGE AND PROMISED THAT IF TIME PERMITTED HE WOULD MEET WITH THE GROUP AGAIN IN SEPTEMBER, SHORTLY BEFORE THE ELECTION.

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